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Agenda item 8

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS THIRTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Djénébou Kaba (Côte d'Ivoire)

PRIORITY THEMES

1. The Commission considered item 5 of its agenda at its 9th to 13th and ..... meetings, on 11, 14, 15 and ... March 1994. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on equal pay for work of equal value, including methodologies for measurement of pay inequities and work in the informal sector (E/CN.6/1994/2);

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on women in urban areas: population, nutrition and health factors for women in development, including migration, drug consumption and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (E/CN.6/1994/3);

(c) Report of the Secretary-General on measures to eradicate violence against women in the family and society (E/CN.6/1994/4).

2. The Secretary-General of the Fourth World Conference on Women introduced the item and emphasized the importance to preparations for the Conference of discussion by the Commission on the priority themes and the Platform for Action. Under the priority theme Equality, she pointed to a number of policies and measures proposed in the report which could be taken to give effect to the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. Regarding the priority theme

Development, she emphasized that the analyses included in the report had been based on the findings of a seminar on the subject held at INSTRAW in Santo Domingo in November 1993 and had focused on the specific problems faced by women living in the rapidly expanding urban environment. The report on the theme Peace had made detailed and pointed recommendations on the matter. Some of those recommendations could help the Commission determine steps to take to give effect to the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 48/104. Some of them had already been included under the item on domestic violence on the agenda of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Control. She further noted that the Commission on Human Rights was proceeding to appoint a Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and that the General Assembly would discuss the issue of violence against migrant women under the terms of resolution 48/109 at its next session.

A. Equality: Equal pay for work of equal value, including methodologies for measurement of pay inequities and work in the informal sector

3. Many representatives emphasized their interest in the issue and noted that, in spite of certain achievements, the pattern of unequal remuneration was universal, though the level of inequality varied from country to country. Despite existing national and international provisions and legislative and constitutional guarantees, women everywhere, on average, were paid less than men. Several representatives underlined the fact that the unequal remuneration in most countries was the result of the persistent undervaluation of female-dominated jobs rather than pay inequities between identical jobs held by men and women. Many representatives emphasized that women still dominated in low-paid, low-skilled jobs with flatter career paths and fewer possibilities for interoccupational mobility.

4. Many representatives pointed to the general undervaluation of women's labour, skills and occupations as the main cause of inequality, which should be addressed by the Governments, employers, trade unions and society. Several representatives stressed the role of trade unions in promoting equality in pay through lobbying for effective equal-value legislation and the submission of relevant cases to labour tribunals. According to many representatives, the pattern of unequal remuneration had its roots in the gender division of labour in the household, in the labour market and in the community where men and women traditionally performed different tasks, differently valued by the society. A few representatives stressed the fact that there was a direct link between women's paid labour and unpaid work at home, which served as further justification for the low pay in traditional female occupations. Several representatives emphasized that inequalities in remuneration were still poorly researched and not well documented statistically and that it was difficult to elaborate efficient methods for implementing the principle of equal remuneration.

5. Many representatives agreed that legislative provisions in the area of equal pay for work of equal value were necessary but not sufficient. Comprehensive policies, including monitoring mechanisms, dissemination of information and statistical data on existing disparities in earnings between men and women, and the implementation of job evaluation methodologies were indispensable. Several representatives stressed that the re-evaluation of jobs irrespective of sex had had a positive impact on reducing the wage gap in their countries. A few representatives noted that pay equity should be addressed not only in legislation but also in collective agreements. One representative underlined the fact that a combination of legal redress and independent conciliation arrangements provided a suitable mix for the enforcement of the right to equal pay for work of equal value. A few representatives noted that while the concept of equal pay for work of equal value was already well-known, the concept "work of comparable worth" was less known and required further analysis. One representative underlined the importance of the concept that pay equity depended less on administrated wage structures and more on equal employment opportunities and positive action programmes enforced by equality legislation.

6. With regard to equal pay for work of equal value, many representatives underlined the importance of targeting the informal sector as the area of growing female employment. The importance of introducing legislation on equal pay for equal work in the informal sector and the policy of pay equity were emphasized by several representatives. Several representatives stressed the urgent need for comprehensive analyses of the situation of female employees in the informal sector.

7. Many representatives emphasized the important role of equality in education and training for closing the wage gap between men and women. The need for integrated and broad training programmes enabling women to enter the occupations traditionally dominated by men, and changing the attitudes of both men and women in that regard was emphasized. Several representatives stated that the organization of training and retraining should provide for reconciliation of the family and work responsibilities. A few representatives stressed the importance of providing child-care facilities.

8. Several representatives underlined the special importance of equity of pay in view of the growth of female-headed households and stressed that women should be given equal opportunity to support themselves and their families.

9. Many representatives stressed the importance of raising the consciousness of women about their rights in the area of work. A few representatives stressed the need for organizing awareness campaigns on the concept of equal pay for work of equal value for employers and for the general public. Closing the wage gap was a developmental issue as well as an important mechanism for achieving equality, the economic independence of women and social justice, and a necessary condition for the full enjoyment by women of their human rights as citizens.

10. The importance of further research was expressed, including the possibility of convening an expert group meeting on the subject. Several representatives urged that the conclusions and recommendations of such a meeting be disseminated among Governments. One representative noted that, without prejudice to the role of ILO in the area, the Commission on the Status of Women should keep close record of all new developments concerning the issue of equal pay for work of equal value and that the issue should be included in the second review and appraisal of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies.